

II. *A Letter from Philip Carteret Esquire,  
Captain of the Swallow Sloop, to  
Mathew Maty, M. D. Sec. R. S. on the  
Inhabitants of the Coast of Patagonia.*

On board the Swallow, in Port Famine,  
Streights of Magellan, 11th January,  
1767.

S I R,

Read Jan. 25, 1770. **T**HE Patagonians having made so much noise of late in Europe, and particularly in England, I imagine a more particular and certain account of them will not be disagreeable to my good friend Doctor Maty.

In the morning of the 16th December, 1766, we were close in with the entrance of the river Gallegos; the country about which river, I have some reason to imagine, is the place of their common abode. I shall forbear to mention my reasons for this supposition, as it would take too much room in this letter. From thence we sailed along in sight of the shore as far as cape Virgin Mary, which is the northermost promontory of the eastermost entrance of the streights of Magellan. There seems to be but a short distance over across this kind of isthmus to the river Gallegos. As we kept sailing  
along

along the shore, we saw some people riding on horses over this part of the peninsula or neck of land, towards the place they saw we were making for with the ships. At the close of day, as the wind was contrary, we anchored, within three or four miles of the above Cape. All the night long these people kept making fires on the beach, abreast of the ships, with a great hollowing noise for us to come on shore to them, which we did early the next morning with some armed boats; but I believe we had no occasion for this (although essential and proper) precaution, for these people received us in a civil, friendly, and pretty regular manner. They all readily sat down at some distance from us, at our desire, by signs to them: and we then went amongst them. Captain Wallis, of the Dolphin, gave them beads, ribbons, and some trifling cutlery, &c. at all which they seemed to be well pleased. They were between sixty and seventy at this time, but their numbers kept increasing, as some continually came down to the sea shore; and before the next morning they were increased to several hundreds, men, women, and children. In the evening, having been obliged to anchor again, one of our boats, in which were several officers, went near the beach, abreast where the ships lay; those people having followed us here, they endeavoured by all the friendly invitations they could make to entice our men to land; but as they had orders from captain Wallis to the contrary, they did not. When they saw that our people would not come on shore to them, they all drew off at a distance, leaving their children by the water-side. This I take to have been done to shew we had no occasion

occasion to be apprehensive of any danger and to express their friendly intentions, and the confidence they had of ours; and probably likewise, from our having taken pretty much knowledge of their children, by dressing some of them with beads and ribbons, when we were on shore before. We measured the heights of many of these people; they were in general all from six feet, to six feet five inches, although there were some who came to six feet seven inches, but none above that. They are well proportioned, their features large and pretty regular, with pretty clear complexions; and they would be much more so, if they did not paint, and expose themselves to the inclemency of the weather, any more than we do in Europe. I am sure there are many in Europe as dark coloured as they are; they have long black hair (but I think not so very black as the generality of the Indians), which many of them had tied up with a kind of woven stuff, of about the breadth of a garter, and seemed to have been made from some kind of wool. They seem to have but little hair on their bodies, and very small breast, little beard, for I believe they pull it out by the roots, for many of them had little tufts left growing at each corner of the mouth, on the upper lips, and one in the hollow part of the chin, in the middle of the under lip; many had the hair of the eye-brows plucked off, and some had their faces painted. They are clothed in skins, which they wear with the fur part next to the body; it hangs from their shoulders half-way down their legs, with a girdle tied about their waist, which makes their cloathing very decent, and they seem to be modest both in their actions and behaviour,

behaviour, at least as much as we saw of it. They wear a kind of boots, which serves them likewise for shoes; but I know not if they wear any kind of drawers or breeches. The upper part of their garments being loose about their shoulders, they did not seem cautious of hiding from sight that part of their bodies; they have fine white teeth, but their hands and feet seemed to me rather small, for such stout, lusty people, by which I imagine they are not used to much hard work. The men and women are clothed alike, so that it requires a little attention to distinguish the sex. Altogether they are the finest set of men I ever saw any where before: there seems to be some subordination amongst them; some had their cloathing painted on the outside, in different squares, strokes, and lines; these I observed seemed to have some authority over the rest. When we went to re-imbark in our boats to return to the ships, most of them wanted to go off with us; we took a few of them in each boat, and carried them on board of each ship, by which the companies curiosity was satisfied as well as ours. We regaled them with such things as we had; they eat salt beef, but seemed most fond of the ship's biscuit, nor did they seem to like much the wine or strong liquors, but drank water by tumblers full. We gave them pipes of tobacco, which they smoked, and did not seem strangers to it; they swallowed the smoke, as the Turks and many other nations do. They seemed very free and easy, no ways mistrustful, or afraid to trust themselves in any part of the ship with us; and they very willingly would have stayed longer with us, for we found some little difficulty to make them

go back ashore. When they found we wanted them to go away, they pointed to the sun, shewing us its course with their hands, and by their signs intimated, that as the sun was so high there was no occasion, and that it would be time enough when it came to go down. They did not seem inclinable to thieve, or take any thing without its being given them, for if they took a fancy to any thing they saw, they made signs for it; and if we did not appear inclinable to give it them, they did not offer to take it. They seemed to be very intelligent and quick of apprehension, and pronounced very well and distinctly many English words after us. We often heard them repeat the word *Chovoa*, but what it meant we could not find out; they made use of the word *Capatana*, which I suppose is from the Spaniards, for captain. They had not any arms with them, so I cannot say what may be their common weapons; they all had a couple of round stones, like two balls, which are slung, one at each end of a cord, which is about one fathom and a half long; and with these two balls I believe they kill most of their game. The method of using them is, by keeping one of the balls in their hand, and swinging the other at the full end of the line, round over their heads, by which it acquires a greater velocity, and they throw it with a prodigious force at a great distance, and exactness, so as to strike a very small object. We saw one of them kill a seal from on horseback in the surf of the sea, on the beach; but in this action, he kept hold of one ball in his hand, while he hit the seal with the other; but I know not if they make use of these balls in fighting with men. Their horses are of the Spanish breed,

breed, and seem to be of a good kind, about 14 to 15 hands high, of different and mixed colours; and from what I saw, I believe they ride them very hard, and do not use them very well. These people have certainly trade and communication with the Spaniards, for one of them had a Spanish broad sword, and he was the only person who was armed amongst them; they had bridles, saddles, stirrups, and whips of skins, all of their own making; some had iron, and other metal bits to their bridles, and we saw some metal spurs. They had a dead ostrich, the flesh of which I saw some eat raw, but whether that be their common method of eating flesh, I know not. I did not see any more of these fine people, although the slow progress we made by the contrary winds, for several days here about, gave us a fine opportunity of being better acquainted with them, and particularly as they kept on the sea shore all the time to the number of three or four hundred. I was not a little chagrined, to find captain Wallis was averse to it, and gave orders nobody should go on shore to them; by this we lost a very fine and favourable opportunity of knowing more of them, and of their country; the knowledge of which in all probability might be of service to Great Britain. It was thought so formerly, when sir John Narborough was sent out by king Charles the second, to endeavour to open a communication with these Indians, for I take them to be the very same nation, called by the Spaniards the Bravoes, who have often made them feel their courage and resolution in the kingdom of Chili. They were the people, who defeated the great general Baldivia, and afterwards destroyed him by

pouring melted gold in his mouth. It would have been very easy, since they were so inclinable to stay with us, to have taken one or two, and to have brought them as far as this place; we might have sent them back by our storeship, who came back this way, about a month after: during this time, by using of them well, we might have got their confidence and friendship, and have learnt some particulars of their country, which could not but have proved beneficial to our country. You may depend on the veracity of the above account, and that I am, with great sincerity,

S I R,

Your most obedient and

most humble servant.

Ph. Carteret.

N. B. This is the copy of the letter I had sent you from Port Famine, by the return of our store-ship, which you told me the other day you never received, and must have been lost.

April 20, 1769.